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ABSTRACT

This training manual begins with a graph depicting trends in schoolplace violence from 1993-1999. Next is a table displaying the parallels between workplace and schoolplace violence. A list of the elements included in a psychological profile of schoolplace violent offenders is provided. The four types of students involved in schoolplace violence are described. Types of warning signs are also listed. Four kinds of threats are defined and examples are provided. Six barriers to reporting or misconceptions about violence are discussed. Next, a flow chart showing the steps a student at risk for schoolplace violence might experience is included. The final and largest section of this booklet focuses on considerations for administrators and school personnel. It discusses policy and procedure development. Specifically, it discusses the threat management and violence risk assessment team, investigation procedures, developing a zero tolerance policy, the after effects of violence, and the media rights of individuals involved in violence. (MKA)

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SCHOOLPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION

TRAINING MANUAL

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THE EVOLUTION OF SCHOOLPLACE VIOLENCE

Since the inception of organized schooling, school administrators have had the task of keeping students safe at school. Violence has been present on school grounds in many forms. There have always been instances of aggression between students, the usual fights on the playground and "schoolyard bullies." However, in the mid to late '90's, a new form of violence began to emerge on the school grounds of America. This type of violence, known as Schoolplace Violence, typically involves a multiple target shooting and, too often, results in mass killing. The dynamics of this new type of violence are different than any previously seen in school. The following details the types of violence seen in schools today.

CATEGORIES OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Traditional Violence: This is the oldest type of violence in school settings, and probably the most common. This category includes fistfights, pushing, shoving, and hair pulling, and is seldom, if ever, lethal. Even in those rare cases where a fatality occurs, the perpetrator's intent is not usually murder. However, this type of violence may be a gateway to more serious forms as outlined below.

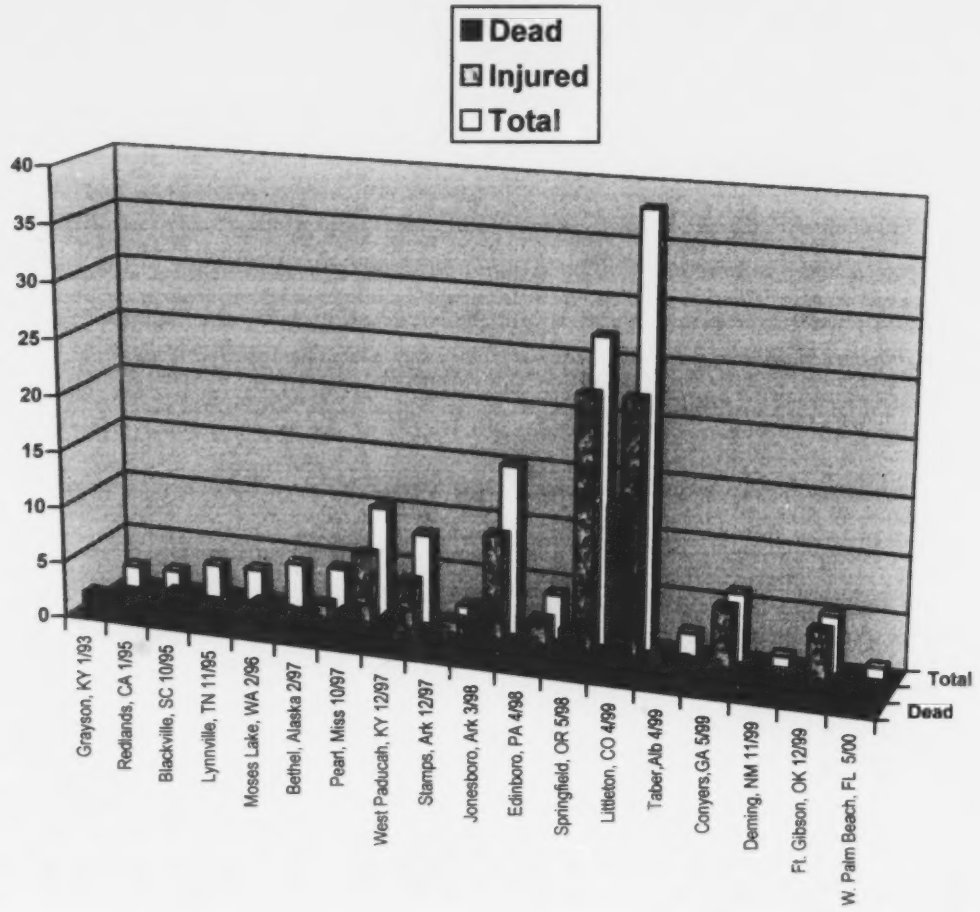
Vandalism: This type of violence includes destroying and/or marring school property and school buses, spray painting, team sport pranks, and incidents of breaking into vending machines and automobiles. While most acts of vandalism are minor, vandalism should be considered as a predictor of Schoolplace Violence when the words or images indicate threats of violence. Through these acts of violence against inanimate objects, perpetrators gain momentum and "practice" what it feels like to inflict violence.

Psychotic Violence: This type of violence is caused by severe mental illness or the ingestion of various substances. With drug use increasing at younger ages, this type of violence is likely to rise. Current statistics report figures from between 1 out of 10, to 1 out of 5 children suffer some emotional or psychiatric disorder. Most of these do not include psychotic features, but the presence of a mental disorder may heighten the child's risk for violence.

Gang Violence: This type of violence has indelibly marked many large, inner-city schools. Gang violence manifests itself in student-on-student, and/or student against school personnel. This category of violence usually has a specific target and motivation, but other victims can be caught in the crossfire.

Schoolplace Violence: The newest category of violence follows a pattern typically seen in adult workplace violence. The perpetrator has a history of perceived injustice, minimal social support, an unsuccessful personal history, poor impulse control, and the violence is revenge-motivated and in response to an identifiable triggering event. Unlike other forms of violence occurring in schools today, warning signs always precede this type of violence, thereby making it predictable in its nature and course. This type of violence is always a culmination of a series of stages, escalating factors, and triggers for the perpetrator. In most cases, no one identified or heeded the warning signs in time to prevent tragedy.

Trends in Schoolplace Violence



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WORKPLACE AND SCHOOLPLACE VIOLENCE PARALLELS

Characteristic	Workplace Violence	Schoolplace Violence
Demographics	Mostly Caucasian men	Mostly Caucasian, adolescent males
Identified Triggering Event	Job loss, break-up of relationship, disciplinary action	Break-up of a relationship, school discipline or expulsion, legal trouble
Socialization History	Unsuccessful personal history Failed marriages & relationships	A loner, social outcast, few friends or intimate relationships
Perceived Injustice History	Filed grievances, chronic complainer Denial of personal responsibility	Projected blame onto others, denial of personal responsibility
History with Violence	Military/weapons experience Owned several guns	Fascination with violent themes in movies, video games, music, class projects. Access to weapons or bombs.
Psychological Traits	Antisocial and narcissistic features May have been treated for depression Obsessive thought patterns	Antisocial and narcissistic features May have been treated for depression Obsessive thought patterns
Threats	Documented in 99% of the cases	Documented in 97% of the cases
Practicing behaviors	Brought gun to work, talked of guns, Damaged property, violence toward animals	Brought gun to school, showed gun(s) to friends, animal torture & killings, damaged property

NOTES:

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PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE OF SCHOOLPLACE VIOLENCE OFFENDERS

- **PERCEIVED INJUSTICE HISTORY**
- **FASCINATION/OBSESSION WITH WEAPONS**
- **VOLUNTARY EXPOSURE TO VIOLENT MEDIA**
  An "Appetite for Violence"
- **HISTORY OF VIOLENCE TOWARDS ANIMALS OR DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY**
- **SOCIALLY ISOLATED, A "LONER"**
- **RECENT LOSS OR SOCIAL REJECTION**
- **SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION**
- **SUICIDALITY**
- **PERSONALITY DISORDERS**
- **HAS MADE THREATS**

Members of The Village

PROTECTORS

Those in a position to recognize the warning signs and to implement appropriate intervention strategies. Includes all school personnel, students and parents.

PERPETRATORS

Individuals who make threats, or engage in threatening and/or violent behavior towards school personnel or students. See pg. 5 for perpetrator characteristics.

VICTIMS OF *CHOICE*

Individuals or groups who are specifically targeted by the perpetrators.

VICTIMS OF *CHANCE*

Individuals who are not specifically targeted for violence, but who are injured or killed by a perpetrator through accidental or purposeful means. In other words, *they were in the wrong place at the wrong time.*

NOTES:

SCHOOLPLACE THREATS

AN IMPORTANT WARNING SIGN

DIRECT

CONDITIONAL

VEILED

ZERO TOLERANCE

THREATS

The first level of violence assessment involves analyzing threats. In the documentation available to date, all but one of the Schoolplace Violence perpetrators made some type of threat before acting. **All threats should be taken seriously.** Threats should be assessed for credibility and seriousness, with an emphasis on evaluating the lethality of the student. Threats can be verbal, non-verbal or written, and fall into three categories: **Direct, Conditional and Veiled**.

DIRECT THREATS

Direct threats are those in which there is no misunderstanding of the perpetrator's intent. Examples include: " I am going to kill you," or in the case at Columbine, "Death to all on April 20th." These are the most serious of all threats since the perpetrator is expressing the desire and intention to harm or kill others. A direct threat is punishable by law in most jurisdictions.

CONDITIONAL THREATS

Conditional threats always contain the word "IF" and/or the word "OR." They are designed to manipulate or intimidate others. Examples include, "They had better not expel me or they will pay," and "If she breaks up with me, I'm going to kill her." In these instances the perpetrator is giving the intended target some time or other option in order to avoid the violence. These threats are particularly dangerous if they are not immediately addressed because the perpetrator gains reinforcement and momentum if not confronted.

VEILED THREATS

Veiled threats are those in which the perpetrator does not directly say what they intend to do, but the meaning is implied or understood by the recipient. These types of threats exist very strongly in the mind of the recipient, but lose their impact when related to others. An example from Columbine is "We're going to punish you." While not entirely clear, this type of threat suggests that the perpetrator is breaking down their inhibitions to violence, and may be advancing to the next level of dangerousness. Veiled threats need to be taken as seriously as other threats.

The following are actual threats in Schoolplace Violence incidents.

Types of Threats in Schoolplace Violence		
Perpetrator	Statement	Type of Threat
Gary "Scott" Pennington	"They don't give awards for what I have planned."	Veiled
Jamie Rouse	"It's going to be tomorrow." 'You're going to lose a couple of friends'	Veiled
Evan Ramsey	Told friends of his plan and threatened to bring a gun to school	Direct
Michael Carneal	Warned friends to stay away because "Something big is going to happen."	Veiled
Mitchell Johnson	(He had) "A lot of killing to do" "Tomorrow you find out if you live or die."	Direct, Veiled
Andrew Wurst	Told friends he was going to use 9 shells to kill 9 people he hated	Direct
Kip Kinkel	Wrote about "plans to kill everybody"	Direct
Eric Harris	Wrote, "Anyone who pisses us off, we do a little deed to their house."	Conditional, Veiled
Eric Harris	"Death to all on April 20th"	Direct
T.J. Solomon	"I am going to blow up this classroom."	Direct
Nathaniel Brazill	Told a friend he was coming back with a gun to get Mr. Locke	Direct
Victor Cordova	"Watch, I'm going to make history blasting this school"	Direct

NOTES:

BARRIERS TO REPORTING MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT VIOLENCE

BELIEF # 1: People just SNAP!

Reality: Violence is *always* the result of a series of thoughts, behaviors, internal and external events. This type of violence does not just appear.

BELIEF #2: Well, he's not after me so who cares?

Reality: Schoolplace Violence is generally a random event. Anyone can be a Victim of Chance, and being the friend of a potential perpetrator does not guarantee protection.

BELIEF #3: I can't report this, he'll come after me!

Reality: There is not a single documented case of a potential perpetrator seeking revenge against an individual who told. There is at least one case where just the opposite is true, where the reporter was granted reprieve from the violence.

BELIEF #4: We'll handle it when it happens.

Reality: Under stress the human body actually works against logical thinking. Thoughts and behaviors become disorganized as panic takes over. Countless people have been killed or injured doing the wrong thing in the face of violence.

BELIEF #5: I don't want to get anyone in trouble!

Reality: Individuals making threats of violence are already in trouble.

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BELIEF #6: Only crazy people do things like that.

Reality: A very small percentage of Schoolplace Violence Perpetrators have a diagnosable serious mental illness. They are not "crazy" in the clinical sense.

BELIEF #7: That kind of thing doesn't happen here

Reality: Many school administrators feel they know their students and believe that Schoolplace Violence could not happen at their school. In almost every case following an incident of Schoolplace Violence, people said the same thing, "I never thought this would happen ***here***!" The following excerpt from a newspaper article depicts how school officials may be unaware of the potential for this problem, and how the students *always* know first.

"Attorney General Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota asked children at a school assembly to stand up if they had ever seen anyone in school with a gun.

'Every kid in school stood up.'

Not one of them had ever reported (seeing) a gun in school."

-Denver Post, July 16, 1998

PATHWAY TO AN AVENGER

FEELS VICTIMIZED

Temperament
Life Context
Role-Modeling

PERCIEVED INJUSTICE

Exposure to Violence: Desensitization
Lack of Positive Peer Group
Negative Role-Models Available
Media Attention to Violence
Anonymous Venting

FORMULATES A PLAN OF REVENGE

Practices
Violent or Aggressive Behavior
Makes Threats

NO CONSEQUENCES

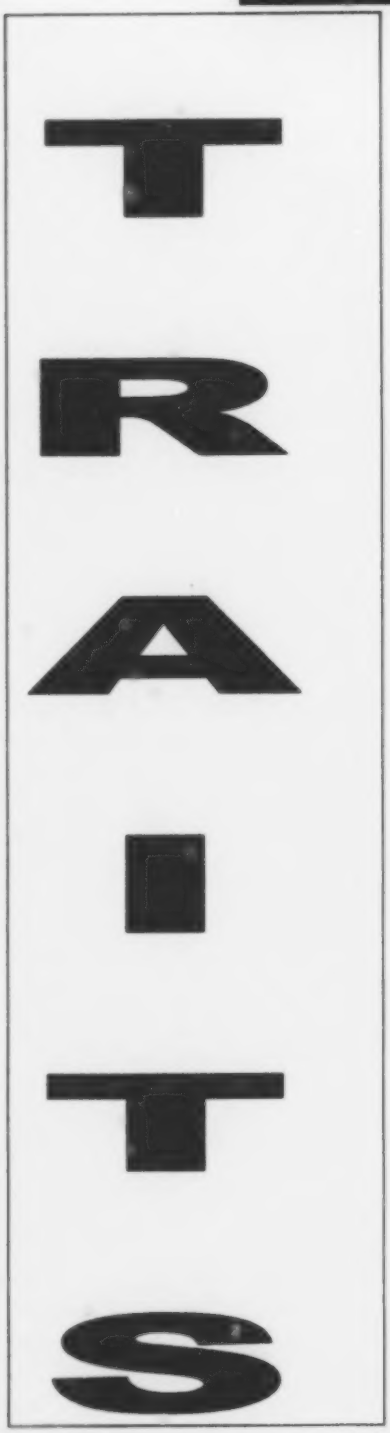
Problem Solving is Narrowed
Lack of Reality Testing
Reinforcement
Erosion of Inhibitions

CONSEQUENCES/INTERVENTION

Pro-Social Coping
No Violence

A TRIGGERING EVENT OCCURS
BECOMES AN AVENGER

RECIPE FOR DISASTER



Time

The amount of time necessary for the perpetrator to enter the school and commit violence. Also refers to the 2-week "RED ZONE" following a triggering event.

Resources

The perpetrator's access to weapons, bomb-making materials and instructions. Also refers to the perpetrator's internal coping resources and ability to manage conflict and anger.

Ability

The student's intellectual and organizational abilities to enact a plan of violence. Their skill in using weapons or incendiary devices.

Interest

The student's interest in violence on a continuum from no interest to obsession.

Triggering Event

An event significant to the student that may act as a catalyst for violent behavior.

Stumbling Blocks

Obstacles that the school can put in place that would deter perpetrators. Also psychological anchors for the student.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND SCHOOL PERSONNEL

POLICY AND PROCEDURE DEVELOPMENT

THREAT MANAGEMENT AND VIOLENCE RISK ASSESSMENT TEAM

SUGGESTED MEMBERS

Principal
Teacher(s)
School Psychologist/Counselor
School Social Worker
School Resource Officer/Law Enforcement
Security Guard
Legal Counsel

Other Potential Resources:

School Violence Expert
School Board/PTA Representative
School Superintendent

NOTES:

THE THREAT MANAGEMENT AND VIOLENCE RISK ASSESSMENT TEAM

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Development of Policy Procedure

A zero-tolerance policy is recommended. This means that any student who makes a threat will be addressed by school officials. ***It does not mean that all students making threats will be expelled or even suspended!*** At a minimum, all threats will be addressed by verifying the threat, confronting the threat-maker, and documenting the incident.

REMEMBER: VERIFY, CONFRONT, DOCUMENT !

Assess Threat Level of Potentially Violent Students

There will be a standardized procedure in place to handle threats in school and to determine the lethality of the threat-maker. Action will be taken based on the determined level of risk.

Crisis Intervention at Three Stages:

1. Threats Made but No Immediate Danger
2. Threat of Violence is Imminent
3. Violence Has Occurred

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Zero-tolerance Policy

Definition of Violence

Any act that is committed with the intention of causing physical or psychological harm to another individual. This also includes any act of destruction or defacing of property belonging to the school, school personnel or students.

Commitment from School Administrators and School Boards

Training

School Policy regarding:
Intimidation
Threats
Violence
Property damage

Search and Inspection Clauses

Reporting Procedures

Investigation Protocol

Disciplinary Actions

Understand the Legal Ramifications of the words "May" and "Will" in a Written Policy

Threat Management and Violence Assessment Team

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Sample Policy on Threats and Violence

Our policy at _____ school is to strive to maintain a school environment free from intimidation, threats, or violent acts. This includes, but is not limited to: intimidating, threatening or hostile behaviors, physical abuse, vandalism, arson, sabotage, possession or use of weapons, or any other act, which, in the administration's opinion, is inappropriate to the school environment. In addition, bizarre or offensive comments regarding violent events and/or aggressive behaviors will not be tolerated.

School employees or students who feel subjected to any of the behaviors listed above should immediately report this to _____ [name of designated school representative(s)]. All complaints will receive prompt attention and the situation will be investigated. Based on the results of the inquiry, disciplinary action deemed appropriate by school administration will be taken.

School employees or students who observe or have knowledge of violation of this policy should immediately report it to _____ [the appointed school representative(s)]. We will investigate these events and will request the cooperation of all incident-related individuals. An employee or student who believes there is a serious threat to the safety and health of others should immediately report their concerns directly to law enforcement authorities.

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INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES:

THREATS AND VIOLENCE IN SCHOOL

PLAN THE INVESTIGATION

Who will be interviewed?
Who will do the interview?
When and where?
Make necessary notifications:
Law Enforcement, Parents, Guardians

PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW

DEVELOP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Standardized questions

CONDUCT THE INVESTIGATION

DOCUMENT THE INVESTIGATION

EVALUATE THE EVIDENCE

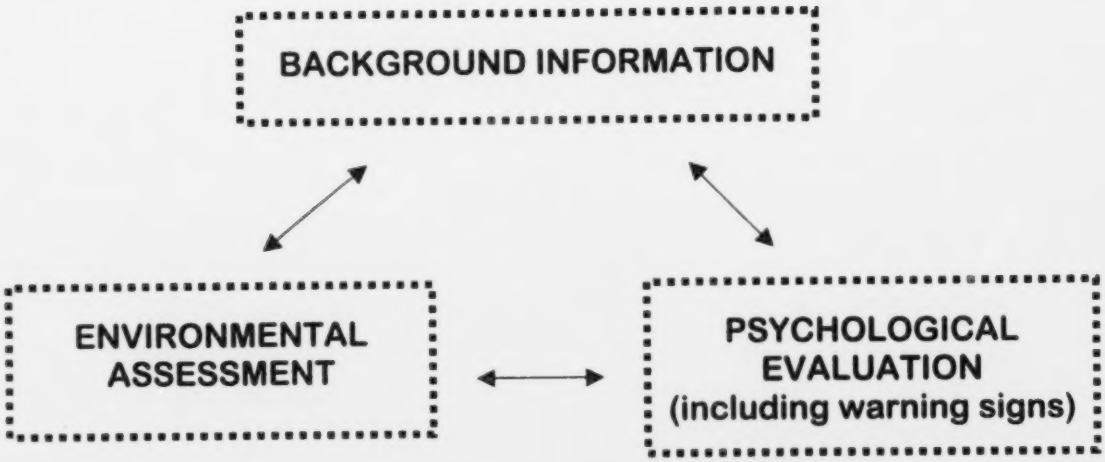
ADVISE THE ASSESSMENT TEAM

TAKE APPROPRIATE CORRECTIVE ACTION

EVALUATE RESULTS

MONITOR THE SITUATION

THREAT AND VIOLENCE RISK ASSESSMENT TRIAD



An accurate violence risk assessment involves consideration of ALL of the above categories. Too often, violence assessments on students are conducted by professionals who, while trained in mental health issues, may be unfamiliar with the nuances and important factors in determining an individual's risk for violent behavior. ***Preferably, an expert in violence prediction and risk assessment should be consulted.***

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Includes information about the child's overall life context. What psychological anchors does the child have in their life that would make it worthwhile NOT to become violent. Other factors included here are access to and/or proficiency with weapons, history of aggressive or violent behavior, history of suicidality or depression, and other historical risk factors.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: Involves standardized interviews of individuals known to the student who may have information concerning their propensity towards violence. Also included here is witnesses' or others' ***perception*** of the risk level posed by the student. Questions directed towards feelings of fear, apprehension or discomfort in the suspected student's presence is extremely important. However, extraneous information or obvious bias should also be considered. Information regarding the exact nature, context and words contained in threats is crucial to this sector of the evaluation triad.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION: Involves clinical interview and formal testing of the student regarding impulse control issues, depression and coping skills. Positive warning signs and historical factors are given serious consideration. ***In the absence of disconfirming evidence, warning signs are considered to be cumulative in the final determination of risk.***

THE AFTEREFFECTS OF VIOLENCE

VICTIMS

SURVIVORS

OBSERVERS

SCHOOL PERSONNEL

FAMILY MEMBERS & FRIENDS

RESCUE PERSONNEL

LAW ENFORCEMENT

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

***** All of the above categories of affected individuals will have special treatment needs. Consultation with mental health experts who specialize in trauma reactions is recommended when the trauma is severe or prolonged. *****

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Individuals involved in Schoolplace Violence incidents are frequently besieged by reporters. It is important for victims and survivors to know that they have rights when dealing with the media. The following is an outline of an individual's rights.

RIGHTS WITH THE MEDIA

- The right to say "no" to an interview or a particular question
- The right to request a specific reporter
- The right to refuse an interview with a specific reporter, even if the interviewee has granted interviews to other reporters
- The right to avoid a press conference atmosphere and speak to only one reporter at a time
- The right to refrain from answering any questions that makes the interviewee uncomfortable or feels are inappropriate
- The right to ask to review quotations in a story prior to publication
- The right to demand a retraction when inaccurate information is reported
- The right to ask that offensive photographs or visuals be omitted from airing or publication

*** The community has the right to grieve and recover in private**

Adapted from Slover, C. & Tasci, D (1999) Trauma Recovery Handbook, published by Nicoletti-Flater Associates

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PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Violence Prevention and Intervention offers a variety of materials and services designed to prevent Schoolplace Violence. VPI publishes a quarterly, 8-page newsletter with the most recent research and developments in Schoolplace Violence Prevention, as well as tips for dealing with specific situations. The newsletter is distributed with right of reproduction for $59/year.

Dr. Kelly Zinna and her staff at VPI offer workshops and training in Schoolplace Violence Prevention. The workshops are designed to range from 2 to 8-hour training blocks, and are tailored to focus on unique issues pertinent to the school. The workshops generally include the following topics:

- **The Evolution of School Violence**
- **Fads and Trends in Violence**
- **Warning Signs of Schoolplace Violence**
- **Psychological Profile of Schoolplace Violence Perpetrators**
- **The Myths and Realities of Violence**
- **Barriers to Reporting Concerns**
- **Categories of Threats and Threat Analysis**
- **Profiling Techniques**
- **Psychological Pathways to Becoming an Avenger**
- **Prevention and Intervention Strategies**
- **Formal Policy Development**
- **How to Conduct an Appropriate Investigation**
- **Survival Strategies During a Violent Incident**
- **Litigation Issues and Forecasting of Trends**

Additionally, Dr. Zinna conducts "Train-the-Trainer" workshops, designed to enable school personnel to train their respective schools. Also available are seminars specifically geared to school mental health professionals which teach the latest techniques in threat analysis and violence risk assessment.

OTHER VALUABLE RESOURCES AVAILABLE ON THE INTERNET:

www.theiacp.org
www.keepschoolsafe.org
www.nssc1.org
www.naspweb.org
www.layneconsultants.com
www.cspv.colorado.edu

Dr. Zinna's book, After Columbine: A Schoolplace Violence Prevention Manual, is available on the website, www.campusviolence.com, via phone or fax, or VPI's e-mail drkellyz@campusviolence.com. Volume and workshop discounts available.

For more information on Schoolplace Violence Prevention, training and consultation services, please visit our website www.campusviolence.com, or contact Dr. Kelly Zinna directly at:

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